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PARIS FOR ARS (DWINTON)
DEPARTMENT FOR AF/PD (ANYASO, TITUS, LISEBY), AF/W (ACOOK)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KIRC](#) [OEXC](#) [KPAO](#) [KISLSCUL](#) [BN](#)

SUBJECT: BENIN: GPRA Report - Black History Month Programming

11. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY: As part of the activities scheduled to celebrate Black History Month, the Public Diplomacy Section of the American Cultural Center in Benin hosted a Black History Month film series program at its outdoor amphitheater. In her opening remarks for the showing of the first two episodes of the movie titled "North and South", PAO Rhonda J. Watson explained the history of Black History Month and acknowledged the February 12 anniversary of Abraham Lincoln, the President who salvaged a divided nation during the time of the Civil War, liberated millions of slaves when he signed the Emancipation Proclamation and, seven generations later, made U.S. President Barack Obama's rise to the highest position in the nation possible.

12. DATE OF ACTIVITY: February 6; Second quarter, FY 09.

13. PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION/OBJECTIVES: This activity was organized to commemorate Black History Month and the valuable contributions made by the African-American community to the building of American society.

14. MPP UMBRELLA THEMES AND AUDIENCE REACHED: Promotion of Democracy and Mutual Understanding: The first session attracted more than one hundred people including High School teachers and students, a Cotonou-based businesswoman, journalists and Mission personnel.

15. RESULT/IMPACT: Excellent. The movie provided an opportunity to improve the viewers' understanding of slavery and how it tore apart social relations and divided the whole country. An understanding of this film's context will hopefully demonstrate for the audience the magnitude of the shift in public opinion that made Barack Obama's election possible and point out the benefits of respecting the Constitution, the rule of law, and democratic principles. In discussions after the film, participants expressed admiration of the way Americans are meeting their challenges and elected an African American as the President of the United States, an accomplishment that was unimaginable a hundred years ago.

16. NON-USG SOURCES OF IN-COUNTRY FUNDING/IN KIND SUPPORT: None

17. QUALITY OF USG SUPPORT: Good. Kudos to ARS Paris for sending us this movie in a timely manner to celebrate Black History Month. Our guests praised the good quality of the film and how it depicts slavery and the race issue in the United States.

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